

Why a mental detox is vital for your well-being

 By [Anja van Beek](#)

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How would you rate your current mental well-being? We all have been challenged over the past few months and have experienced how our mental health (our emotional, psychological, and social well-being) can impact and affect our thoughts, feelings and actions.



As a working mom, I can relate with not always feeling as if you have all the ducks in a row. There have been days during the lockdown period that has been especially challenging and I had to remind myself that I don't have to be 'everything for everyone'. More importantly, I had to ensure that my cup is filled so that I have the capacity to remain resilient in these complex and uncertain times.

Why is a mental detox so critical?

A mental detox is to be intentional about taking a step away from all activities or behaviours that are not nurturing your emotional, psychological and social well-being and embracing activities that increase that 'happy feeling'.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) urged governments to increase funding for mental healthcare, warning that demand for those services was set to rise in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

It's World Mental Health Day on 10 October, and in the spirit of this very important day to normalize mental well-being, here are a few tips to consider:

- **Unplug from social media.** Is your mobile phone the first thing you look at in the morning? It might not necessarily be for scrolling down Instagram or Twitter. It might be to read the latest news. Whatever you are using your mobile for, it is never a good idea to look at it as your first activity in the morning. A better habit might be to leave your mobile phone on a dresser table and not on your bedside table.
- **Prioritise your goal-directed state.** This is not referring to setting your goals – this is focused on an unconscious and dynamic brain state. Optimism, gratitude and reducing negative thought patterns act as a springboard for this brain state. Experiment with what is working best for you to ignite the focused state. Here's a few examples: by having a gratitude journal; reflecting on past successes; or finding benefit in every situation.
- **Suppress the snooze temptation.** Make a conscious decision to prioritise a rhythmic living - it will boost your wellness and build resilience. Not sure where to start? An easy step is to start with your sleep rhythm. To go to bed and wake up at the same time every day – yes, even over weekends. This sleep rhythm is as essential as the rhythm of your heartbeat. So, next time when the alarm goes off, don't be tempted to press the snooze button. Rather, get up and start your day.
- **Phone a friend.** When last have you phoned a friend to support you? Consider asking a friend to be your thinking partner. This is an effective strategy to provide a space and time to support each other. Sometimes you need a soundboard to hear yourself think. The (ideal) listening partner will listen without interrupting or trying to give advice or a solution and will take a non-judgmental stance during the conversation.
- **Take regular meaningful pauses.** How long can you focus without taking a break? If the majority of your work is done on a computer, it is always recommended to take more regular breaks. A 5- to 10-minute break every hour is better than a 20-minute break every three hours. Create a habit of standing up, moving around - by shaking your arms and legs will contribute to keeping your mind focused and body energised and the blood flowing to your brain.

An effective way to be present in the current moment is to involve your senses to notice different aspects of your environment. For example, listen to the sound behind the noise you are hearing such as the humming of a refrigerator in the kitchen.

- **And breeeeethhheeee.** Do you feel out of breath and the day just started? If you don't take continuous deep breaths, you will feel out of breath the whole time, which will make you feel sleepy and will impact your productivity. Proper oxygen flow is extremely important for your brain to reset and recharge your adrenal glands, and to step out of the "flight and flight mode".

This has been a bumpy start to the new decade. A mental detox might just be what is required to essentially jumpstart the last stretch of 2020.

ABOUT ANJA VAN BEEK

Anja van Beek is an independent leadership consultant, talent strategist and coach.

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